

## 48<sup>th</sup> SEMDSA and 11<sup>th</sup> LASSA Congress 2013



Daksha Jivan, Joint Chair, Local Organising Committee of SEMDSA and LASSA 2013

It is my privilege to warmly welcome you to Johannesburg this April autumn to join us for our annual Society for Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA) and biennial Lipid and Atherosclerosis Society of Southern Africa (LASSA) Congress.

Our venue is the historic Wanderers Club in Illovo. A group of young rugby players joined forces in 1886 as the first Wanderers Rugby Club in Johannesburg. These young migratory workers or "wanderers" had travelled from other mining towns, like Kimberley, in search of their fortunes. They were attracted to the mining camp that grew from the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand. Shortly thereafter, another group who called themselves the Wanderers Cricket Club joined them. The Wanderers Club was formed in 1888, and still exists today. The Club was originally established on the site of the current railway station in 1888. In 1947, when the railway station was expanded, the Wanderers Club and clubhouse were relocated to Illovo, the same site where it proudly stands

today. Today, the Wanderers Club is not only the home for rugby and cricket, but also a wide range of sports, including badminton, snooker and karate. In 2004, a fire virtually destroyed the Club, reducing to ash irreplaceable items such as historic documents, photos, trophies and records. Fortunately it was rebuilt to its former glory for us to enjoy once more. Welcome to beautiful and bustling Johannesburg: The Place of Gold.

The Congress kicks off with an innovative appetiser. I have pleasure in introducing the pre-SEMDSA symposium entitled Endo 101, the first general endocrine update to be attached to the SEMDSA Congress. The programme aims to provide an update on important endocrine topics for the general practitioner, the physician with an interest in endocrinology, as well as medical registrars and trainees in endocrinology. The carefully chosen speakers for Endo 101 include experts in their respective fields from across the country, as well as Tony Toff from Edinburgh, in the United Kingdom.

The main course will provide an interesting and complex array of tastes for every palate. The invited speakers for the SEMDSA Congress, both international and local, are of a high calibre and have been chosen to ensure a varied and balanced programme. In the field of diabetes, Prof Ian Campbell from the University of St Andrews in Fife, UK, will applaud the unrivalled benefits of metformin, while questioning the role of sulphonylureas in an incretin world. These are certainly important considerations in a South African setting where incretin drugs are not yet available for use in the public sector. Wendy Macfarlane, from the University of Brighton in the UK, will shed light on our losing battle against the obesity epidemic: *Eat less, move more: if it's so simple to fight the obesity epidemic, why are we not winning?* Wendy's other offering, entitled *Biology or technology: stem cells, transplants and the artificial pancreas project*, is likely to sate the appetites of clinicians and basic scientists alike.

We are spoilt for choice in the area of thyroid disease. Tony Toff, from Spire Murrayfield Hospital in Edinburgh, questions our confidence in treating Graves' disease, and in his second plenary lecture, provides an overview of the management of differentiated thyroid cancer. Prof Susan Mandel, from the University of Pennsylvania in the USA will be in Johannesburg, on an exchange programme with Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. She has kindly agreed to participate in our Congress. She will enlighten us on screening for thyroid disease in pregnancy, and in

her meet-the-professor session, on molecular testing for thyroid nodules.

Peter Trainer from The Christie in Manchester, UK, will talk about growth hormone use and abuse, as well as the management of acromegaly in his meet-the-professor session. Professor Shane Norris, proudly a Witsie, will delve into the developmental origins of diabetes. And last, but certainly not least, Prof Roy Shires, from Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg, will no doubt deliver a memorable lecture on Nobel Prize winners in the field of endocrinology and metabolism.

The LASSA Congress is a fitting lipid-rich dessert. Prof Jane Armitage from the University of Oxford in the UK will talk about the safety of the now commonly used statin. In view of the negative outcome of the Heart Protection Study 2-Treatment of High-Density Lipoprotein to Reduce the Incidence of Vascular Events (HPS2-THRIVE) study, I am very interested to hear from Prof Armitage in her second plenary lecture on the future of lipid-modifying therapy.

While the eminent international speakers are a definite draw card to attend the Congress, the real purpose of the SEMDSA Congress is to showcase our local talent. Judging from the overwhelming response and record number of received abstracts, I'm pleased to say that local research is alive and well. It should be an ongoing priority for

SEMDSA to encourage and promote local research in the field of endocrinology and metabolism.

It has been a busy year for our young local organising committee, the majority of whom, including myself, have never before been part of a SEMDSA organising committee. However, in retrospect, I'm glad to have accepted the initially terrifying challenge of chairing the organising committee. I would like to extend a sincere "thank you" to the ever-supportive local organising committee, to the seniors of the Johannesburg circuit (Prof Ken Huddle, Prof Derick Raal and Prof Roy Shires) for their guidance, and to Shelley Harris, whose efficiency is so effortless that it's easy to take for granted. Finally, we are grateful for the generous financial sponsorship of our pharmaceutical partners, without whom this Congress would not have been possible.

Mahatma Gandhi once said: "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever".

Let's live and learn together, dear friends and colleagues. I look forward to meeting you at the SEMDSA Congress 2013!

**Daksha Jivan**

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